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The Role of Personality Traits and Resilience on Homesickness of College Students

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Abstract

This study investigated the role of personality traits and resilience on homesickness among students of Tabriz University. The sample was 470 freshmen and senior students of Tabriz University which were selected through multiple stage stratified sampling. The data was analyzed through Pearson correlation coefficient, multiple regression, and independent *t*-test. The research findings indicated that there was significant relation between neuroticism and openness to experience and homesickness. Meanwhile, there was significant negative correlation between resilience and family homesick and home returning desire (homesickness scale) and also there was a significant positive correlation between resilience, homesick for members and familiar context. The results of *t*-test showed that there was no significant difference between the average of students' homesickness according to the academic year, field of study and being native or non-native student. The regression analysis indicated that neuroticism, being native or non-native, gender, agreeableness, extroversion, openness to experience scales significantly predicted homesickness.

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1. Introduction

Everyone in his stage of life, due to his conditions of education, can live far away from his own original place of residence. Educational activities that cause the individuals to live far away from their home and family are one of the main factors of stress that brings them in contact with places, other individuals and cultures which can cause many problems, homesickness is one of them.

Fisher and Ho (1998) believed that homesickness is a series of uncomfortable and sometimes unbearable feelings for people that are experienced after leaving home, family, friends and familiar surroundings. Homesickness represents a motivational – cognitive complex state, focused on the sense of loss and sadness to their family, friends and the environment. The amount of homesickness is influenced by different factors such as age, gender, personality traits and resiliency of people.

Garmzy and Mastn (1991) defined resiliency as a process, power, or outcome of successful adaptation to threatening conditions (Waller, 2001). In other words, resiliency is a positive adjustment in response to adverse

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conditions (Waller, 2001). It can be said that resiliency is a person's ability to maintain life - mental balance in high- risk situations (Connor & Davidson, 2003).

Personality represents those of individual characteristics that account for consistent behavioural patterns (Pervin, 2002). To define personality, various approaches have tried to define the related facts by representing their own assumptions and methods.

Some researchers (Costa & Mc Carey, 1992) believe that the attributes can be set based on five broad bipolar dimensions, which today is known as the Big Five dimensions of personality traits (as cited in Pervin and John, 2002). In NEO's perspective personality has five factors including neuroticism, extroversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and personality of individuals which is measured based on these factors. Costa and McCarrie (1985), by using factor analysis, found that these five major factors can be placed between the individual differences in personality traits.

Psychoanalysts perspective which is based on Freud's clinical studies and treatments, with a deterministic approach to explain human behaviour by emphasizing the role of childhood in shaping the adult personality, focuses on unconscious factors of conflict, reconciliation among motives, drives, needs and conflicts (Grossi, 2001; Pervin & John, 2002).

In new perspective the psychoanalysis of personality is known as the environmental products, due to its emphasis on social factors (excluding Jung). The theorists of this perspective called psycho-social theorists.

The cognitive perspective of personality investigate the ways that people use to explore themselves and the world around them, in other word, in this perspective thinking, perception, evaluation, decision making and problem solving by individuals are discussed. Cognitive processes include the whole of human personality rather than part of it.

In social learning, behaviour is known as a function of position and it is believed that individuals have particular behaviour patterns in different situations (Shoda, Mischel, & Wright, 1994, as cited in Pervin & John, 2002).

Margot et al. (2003) in their study named "*Homesickness, temperament and character*" found that high scores on Harm Avoidance result in low scores on Homesickness experiences. It seems that general personality factors do have some predictive power and can be considered a useful instrument in detecting homesickness-specific features, which might be helpful in the planning of treatment and management of the therapeutic relationship.

To behaviourists, personality is merely an accumulation of learned responses to stimuli, set of overt behaviours, or habit systems, personality refers only to what can be objectively observed and manipulated (Schultz, 2005).

Phenomenology by emphasizing on the human virtues, his free and conscious will and self-actualization draws a positive and beautiful image of human nature and portrays him as an active, informed and creative being, in the path of growth and self-actualization (Schultz, 2005).

In a study done by Laura Campbell and others (2006), resilience was negatively associated with neuroticism, and positively related to extraversion and conscientiousness which suggests that results supported hypotheses regarding the relationship of resilience to personality dimensions and coping styles.

Bernat (2009) in his research named "*Youth resilience and role of schools in enhancing hope, optimism, and success factors in school youth*" showed that there is a significant positive correlation between resilience and optimism. Teachers training besides giving hope to students has an important role in increasing hope, optimism, resiliency and success in school youth.

Baldwin et al. (2010) in their research named "*Resilience and optimism*" showed that there is a significant positive relationship between resilience and optimism and also showed that resilience is positively correlated with optimism and negatively correlated with psychological distress.

2. Research method

The target populations of this study were freshman and senior undergraduate students of Tabriz University majoring in four major fields of Basic Sciences, Humanities, Engineering and Agriculture in the second semester of the academic year 2011-12. 361 students were selected through random cluster sampling by Cochran formula and for increasing the sampling accuracy and decreasing the error of random sampling in selected groups, one

hundred and ten people added to randomized groups, and totally four hundred and seventy people's questionnaires were analyzed.

Three standard questionnaires were used as data collection instruments, homesickness was measured by Van Vliet's questionnaire (2001) (HS-F) which had 36 items, each with a 5-point range of responses and was adjusted with characteristics of the Iranian community and its reliability scale in this study was 0.90 which was calculated by coefficient alpha of Cronbach. Also resilience was measured by Connor – Davidson Resilience scale (CD-RISC) which had 25 items, each with a 5-point range of responses and was adjusted to be used in Iran and its reliability scale in this study was 0.85 which was calculated by researcher using coefficient alpha of Cronbach. Also Personality was investigated based on the revised version and short version of Personality Inventory (NEO – FFI).

In this study the relationship between personality traits and resilience variables with homesickness feeling of students is investigated through calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient. Also, for investigating the relationship between the effect of being freshman or senior, gender, being native or non-native with homesickness t-test was used, and for investigating the average of homesickness feeling in students F-test was used. The impact of personality traits and resilience on student homesickness is calculated by using stepwise regression.

3. Findings of research

Table 1 shows the summary of results for investigating the correlation between the independent and background variables with homesickness as the only dependent variable of the study. According to the finding, there is a relatively moderate significant relationship between neuroticism and homesickness, so the higher the neuroticism, the higher the homesickness is in a person. Also, there is a very weak relationship between openness and homesickness but the positivity of relationship signs that the more is openness the more homesickness would be.

Findings showed that although homesickness scale, which is based on the low intensity of correlation of variables with each other, has low total score but high significance level. The negative sign indicates an inverse relationship between resiliency and homesickness means the higher the resiliency the less homesickness will be in a person.

None of the studied background variables showed a significant correlation.

Table 1. The result for investigating the correlation between the independent and background variables with homesickness as dependent variable

Studied variables	Studied Dimensions	Pearson's correlation coefficient	t	F	p
Personality traits	Neuroticism	0.282**			0.001
	Extroversion	- 0.002			0.966
	Openness	0.093*			0.043
	Agreeableness	0.025			0.596
	Responsibility	- 0.026			0.581
Resilience		- 0.144**			0.002
Background Variables	Effect of Being Fresh Man or Senior		0.439		0.661
	Gender		0.087		0.930
	Being Native or Non-Field of Study		- 1.344		0.180
				0.687	0.560

** P < 0.01

* P < 0.05

For predicting criterion variable through predictor variable (Personality traits), regression coefficient model was applied.

Table 2. Regression coefficients of criterion and predictor variables in regression model and their significance

Step 6	B	Beta	Sig.
Constant	- 5.940		0.594
Neuroticism	1.135	0.436	0.001
Extraversion	0.470	0.144	0.026
Native/Non-native	8.597	0.195	0.001
Sex	- 6.914	0.173-	0.002
Agreeableness	0.531	0.156	0.008
Openness to experience	0.537	0.142	0.017

4. Conclusion

For predicting criterion variable (homesickness) from predictor variable (personality traits), regression coefficient was used.

In this study, the variables that remained in the regression model were namely: neuroticism, extroversion, being native or non-native, gender, agreeableness and openness variables, To clarify the results and positive correlation between neuroticism and homesickness, characteristics of neuroticism can be used, in which the high score means low power in impulse control. Also for explaining the agreeableness it can be said that the low score in this index is associated with characteristics of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), anti-social and paranoid; while high score is associated with dependent personality disorder (Costa & McCrae, 1990), none of two poles of this index can be considered to have social prestige. In explaining openness experience has shown that these people are more conservative (Fathi Ashtiyani, 2011), thus it can be said that the more conservative is one person, the more homesick he would be. To explain the significance of being native or non-native, it can be said that as far the geographical distance is, the more homesickness for familiar environment and people would be. Bossick (2008), Wollwage and Seth (2008), Patricia Ryan (2006), Carolyn and Youssef (2007), Riolli (2006) and Garbowski (2010) had found a relationship between personality traits and resilience that all are consistent with the present study.

In Mashhadi's study (2010) neuroticism, extraversion, openness and agreeableness were significant in the regression model but responsibility dimension was not significant, all these are consistent with the present study, but in that study girls suffer from homesickness more than boys and findings regarding personality dimensions and homesickness are not consistent with the present study.

The results of the investigation done by Archer et al. (1998) indicated that females suffer from homesickness more than males. However, Kazantzis and Flet (1998) did not observe any significant difference between men and women, both are inconsistent with this study, since in this study boys suffer from homesickness more than girls. This can be justified through the reason that verbal communication skills and sociability power of girls in collective environments are high and because of this reason they feel less homesick and perhaps the variation in the results of this article is because of the research samples, since these samples represented the population of the students at university and their age and intelligence range were differ than the one in the whole society.

The results from several studies carried out by Eurelings - Bontekoe et al. (1994, 1996) are consistent with the results of Verschuur et al. (2003, 2001) and Voolstra (1992), but inconsistent with the results of this study.

Research findings on average difference of all primary variables between male and female students at Tabriz University showed that boys tend to have higher average scores in total score of homesickness and its indicators (desire to go back home and feel lonely), and in compatibility index the higher score means higher incompatibility with new situation, in this index girls are more compatible than boys, perhaps this is because women tend to communicate quickly with others. The total score of Resilience Scale had higher average in boys, because in critical situations men usually use problem-oriented solution style.

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